

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

Dependent Claims 3-5 have been amended for clarity. New dependent Claims 15-18 have been added and will be discussed below.

In the outstanding Office Action, each of independent Claims 1 and 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nolte (DE 3536285) in view of Hancock (USPN 5,086,661). The Office basically asserted that Nolte discloses all of the elements of Claims 1 and 8 with the exception of the claimed central bearing tube of plastics material. The Office further contended that one of ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to modify Nolte's tube 2 by making it of plastics material in view of Hancock's teachings of plastic "tubes" 10 and 11.

Even assuming *arguendo* that the Office's characterization of Nolte is correct, the proposed combination of Nolte and Hancock is clearly untenable. As will be apparent, Hancock's tubes 10 and 11 are interposed between his shaft 3 and outer tube 4, thereby preventing contact between the two. This is entirely inconsistent with the assumed structure of Nolte, having tubes 1 and 2

in contact with each other. Further, to the extent that Hancock might have suggested modifying Nolte to use a plastics tube, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have been motivated to make Nolte's tube 2 of plastics material, but rather to insert a plastic tube between Nolte's shaft 3 and outer tube 4 in keeping with Hancock's teachings. Note also that Nolte's tube 2 appears to provide support for steering a shaft member 4 through a rotary bearing. Hancock does not suggest the suitability of a plastics tube for this purpose in the environment of Nolte.

As is evident from the preceding remarks, Hancock would not have suggested modifying Nolte as proposed in the rejection under § 103(a). Accordingly, the rejection is unsupported by the references and should be withdrawn. Likewise, the rejections of any dependent claims should be withdrawn.

New dependent Claims 15-18 have been added in order to provide specific protection for certain aspects of the illustrative embodiment of the invention. As will be apparent, the features of these claims are neither taught nor suggested by Nolte and Hancock.

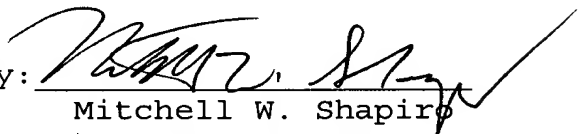
This application is clearly in condition for allowance for the reasons set forth above and should now be passed to issue.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been requested separately, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

MWS:kss

Miles & Stockbridge P.C.
1751 Pinnacle Drive
Suite 500
McLean, Virginia 22102
(703) 903-9000

By: 
Mitchell W. Shapiro
Reg. No. 31,568

October 10, 2005